



SCENIC
OHIO

AMERICA'S OLDEST
ADVOCATE OF
SCENIC HIGHWAYS



NEWS

SPRING 2016

Scenic Ohio is a 501 (c) 3 Charitable Non-profit Organization. It is the only not-for-profit in Ohio dedicated to protecting and enhancing the visual quality and scenic character of Ohio's towns and countrysides. Scenic Ohio is the longest standing non-profit in America that advocates keeping our highway corridors beautiful and safe.

**Donations are welcome.
Send your tax deductible
contributions to:**

Scenic Ohio
P.O. Box 09816
Columbus, OH 43209

www.ScenicOH.org

Scenic Ohio has a unique history as the only organization dedicated to the sustained beautification of Ohio's byways and communities. Founded in 1933 as the Ohio Roadside Council, it has a distinguished heritage as the longest standing non-profit organization in America dedicated to improving roadway environments and aesthetics. Scenic Ohio works with local and state agencies, communities, and individuals to achieve its goals to conserve and protect Ohio's many scenic byways, historic, prehistoric, ecological resources, and the appearance of gateways.



LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

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Ohioans want Safe and Beautiful highway corridors. In simple terms that's the mission of Scenic Ohio, founded as the Ohio Roadside Development Council in 1933.

The Federal Highway Administration and Ohio Department of Transportation's research, planning, design, and management of public right-of-ways has evolved with one central mission; to serve and protect the public's transportation needs, health, safety and welfare.

Since its founding, Scenic Ohio has advanced greening highways with native plants, reduced mowing, reduced distractions, managing storm water in harmony with nature, and good planning with the public and local jurisdiction's active participation. So where do we stand with protecting the public's health, safety and welfare on and adjacent to Ohio's highway corridors?

Within right-of-ways, government agencies and jurisdictions advance the planning, design and construction of Ohio's corridors with a high level of professionalism. Repairs, updating old roadways and new roadway design and construction clearly advance safety and maintenance. However, we have much to improve outside of the public right-of-way and inside of our vehicles. Safety issues not being effectively addressed are directly related to distracted drivers of vehicles including:

- Cell phone / Smart phone use-- talking, reading email, social media and texting
- Standard and Electronic billboard distractions

Many additional distractions occur inside our vehicles including GPS use, video-watching, bad weather, tiredness, eating, drinking, looking for on-premise signs, talking and other similar distractions.

Texting receives most of the public's attention concerning distractions. The average time a person's eyes are off the road while texting is five seconds. At 55 mph a car travels the distance of a football field (300'). With smartphone ownership growing at exponential rates, the opportunity for texting related accidents grows.

Electronic billboards are timed for an average 6 second change. There's evidence viewers of electronic billboards often watch longer than 6 seconds "to see what the message changes to" which equates to further distracted driving. It seems the real question we should ask is, "how many lost lives and injuries do electronic billboard distractions claim each year?" As distraction research advances, elected officials and jurisdictions must look at the facts and take actions to protect public safety. The impact of standard and electronic billboards is clearly being shown as a threat to public health, safety and welfare. Our state agencies and local jurisdictions must consider moratoriums on them to protect the Ohio public.

Lets all encourage Safe and Beautiful highway corridors.

Sincerely,

Gary W. Meisner, Chairman Scenic Ohio



Pollinators and Innovative Pathways Make News at TRB Annual Meeting

by Rick Record

The Transportation Research Board of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (TRB) is a collection of researchers, expert practitioners and policy leaders from around the world that focuses on discovering and bringing in to practice new ways to make all modes of transportation more effective and cost-efficient, beneficial and safer.

Every January, more than 10,000 transportation professionals from six continents convene in Washington DC for the TRB Annual Meeting. Thousands of technical research presentations and hundreds of subject area committee meetings covered literally everything in transportation. The agenda featured topics from guardrail design to deepwater port maintenance to commercial air traffic management to innovative railway bridge design to new traffic forecasting algorithms to automated cars on highways ... all are part of the TRB world.

Among many items of interest to the mission of Scenic Ohio, two presentation sessions were of note. Ohio DOT's Scott Lucas, a friend of Scenic Ohio, and representatives from New York DOT and Minnesota DOT, presented information on the evolving practice of roadside management for pollinator benefit in a well-attended session entitled ***Pollinators on the Verge: Policies, Practices and Implications for Conservation in Roadside Habitats.***

In another session, ***Achieving Measurable Environmental Benefit as a Direct Result of Alternative Project Delivery***, three speakers detailed how non-conventional project delivery pathways, such as Design-Build or Public-Private Partnerships, can effectively increase benefits to the environment over "same old" approaches. Minnesota DOT Research Director Hafiz Munir, PE, PhD, detailed such benefits achieved for a challenging project on the highly-sensitive St. Croix River.



MnDOT used Design-Guild performance measures to achieve a **175% reduction in phosphorus load** for this project on the St. Croix River, a nationally-designated Wild & Scenic River, compared to a conventional project approach.

Scenic Ohio Awards

by Neil McCormick

The 2015 Scenic Ohio Awards took place at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium's African Events Center on Oct. 30th, and honored Ohio's five certified Zoos for creating outstanding scenic, sustainable and educational places for animals, plants and all Ohioans.

Receiving the award for Scenic Ohio's first ever recognition of zoos were: **The Akron Zoo, Doug Piekarz, President and CEO...** **The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, Thane Maynard, Director...** **Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, Tad Schoffner, Curator of Animals...** **Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, Tom Stalf, President / CEO ... Toledo Zoo and Aquarium, Jeff Sailer, Executive Director.**

Cathryn Hilker, renowned expert on Cheetahs spoke of her experience in Africa meeting legendary anthropologist Louis Leakey and being inspired by him to begin her work of saving Cheetahs and other large cats.

Hilker's tireless efforts positioned the Cincinnati Zoo as one of the world's premier cheetah breeding centers and led the zoo to develop its Cheetah Encounter, a unique environment where visitors see cheetahs run at top speed on a daily basis.

Ms. Hilker shared the spotlight with one of her cheetah friends, to the delight of the crowd.



ODOT's New Year's Resolution – To Save Ohio's Pollinators

by Dianne Kahal-Berman

Many of you are aware of the National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators Report produced by the White House Pollinator Health Task Force issued on May 19, 2015. If you aren't, please Google it. In this report you will see three overarching goals:

1. Reduce honey bee colony overwintering losses to no more than 15% within 10 years
2. Increase eastern population of monarch butterflies to 225 million occupying an area of approximately 15 acres in the overwintering grounds in Mexico by 2020
3. Restore or enhance seven million acres of land for pollinators over the next five years through federal actions and public-private partnerships.

What does this mean for Ohio?

Let's do the math and let's use only 48 of the 50 states. Seven million acres divided by 48 means that each state needs to consider restoration of about 145,834 acres. In Ohio, with 88 counties, this translates to a commitment of 1,658 acres dedicated to habitat in each county.

How do we intend to address this need? In addition to installations of multiple acres of native plantings such as those now at the Ross, Darke and Fairfield county sites, ODOT has a sunflower program of 30.4 cumulative

acres planned in five of our 12 districts with two more districts joining in the near future. That's more than half the state's districts now involved!

Most encouraging is ODOT's recent partnership with the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative (OPHI), comprised of multiple state agencies and volunteer organizations such as the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife (FWS), and Pheasants Forever among others. Habitat is currently being established statewide over a few hundred acres. However, as encouraging as this is, we are barely making a dent in Ohio's goal of 145,834 acres. And that's where ODOT's mowing habits come into play.

Although ODOT does not have a firm policy in place to reduce mowing along roadsides, ODOT Highway Management staff are considering mowing back in areas beyond the roadway ditch line only once in late fall. This would allow plants to complete their growth cycle and promote native habitat in addition to reducing mowing costs.

ODOT's first priority is the safety of the driving public. While remaining true to this mission, there are areas where once a year mow back would be acceptable, appropriate and environmentally preferable.



That is where **you** come in. In order to further these endeavors to promote the welfare of bees and butterflies, please show your support! **Let your government representatives know of your concern about bee and butterfly conservation and your enthusiasm toward ODOT's environmentally responsible actions.** And if you don't agree, that's all right too because all dialogue is important.

This year, let's promise ourselves to join ODOT in this New Year's Resolution.

Let's do our part together toward "Saving Ohio's Pollinators!"



Photo by William Warty

*"Every particular in nature, a leaf, a drop, a crystal,
a moment of time is related to the whole, and partakes of
the perfection of the whole."* ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Reed v. Gilbert Supreme Court Ruling and Its Impact on Billboard Law

by Pat Meade

Some law directors/village solicitors may misinterpret the Supreme Court *Reed v. Gilbert* ruling as a setback

for those communities wanting to prohibit billboards for traffic safety and aesthetic concerns. In Ohio, a municipal law director may argue litigation is cost prohibitive or a community can't win, but Scenic America's (SA) volunteer legal committee issued an optimistic report that's welcome news to the scenic community and local governments across the country and is summarized below.

The good news for supporters of scenic beauty is that the ruling in *Reed v. Gilbert*, June 18, 2015, upholds long-standing court-recognized distinctions between on-premises and off-premises sign (billboards) regulation. In addition, the three justices' concurring opinion understood the distinction between content-neutral onsite and offsite signs, and therefore is subject only to the intermediate standard of review. This level of review requires a "substantial government interest" and allows communities to regulate signs in a way that fully protects public safety and addresses legitimate aesthetic objectives. SA's report reads, in part, "Scenic advocates for billboard control, as well as state and local governments, were handed a significant victory on this point. ..."

The billboard industry's trade association, the Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA), sought Harvard Law School Professor Laurence Tribe's opinion on the impact of *Reed*. In short, Tribe made it clear the distinction between offsite commercial signs (billboards) and onsite signs is still valid under the U.S. Constitution and when combined with sign laws that are deemed content-neutral, he upheld that intermediate scrutiny would apply. His position aligns with the position of Scenic America's legal committee.

Scenic Ohio Chair Gary Meisner added, "The U.S. Supreme Court ruling on *Reed v. Gilbert* validates the rights of Ohio communities to prohibit billboards for legitimate traffic safety and aesthetic concerns when combined with lawful content-neutral onsite/offsite sign ordinances. I urge all government officials, municipal law directors and planners to read Scenic America's report in its entirety."

To read the full report by Scenic America's volunteer legal committee, visit www.scenicoh.org.



"Visual pollution is more poisonous than any other pollution because it kills the soul."

~Friedensreich Hundertwasser

"In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing."

~Theodore Roosevelt

"The best way out of a difficulty is through it." ~Will Rogers



Ornate Ceiling, Anderson House

Keynote Speaker: Senator Tom Udall

Lynda Byrd Johnson Robb (in purple)

Darwina Neal and Dan Marriott

C. Braxton Moncure and Scenic Ohio Member Andy Kesselem

Diane Rehm and Didi Cutler

Rachel Thurlow, guest, and Abby Dart

Scenic America Co-Founder Charlie Floyd

Scenic America President Mary Tracy and Larry Rockefeller

Keynote Speaker Cokie Roberts

Rob Draper, National Scenic Byway Foundation

Ronald Lee Fleming FAICP Scenic America Chair

Kathryn Welch Howe and Margaret Lloyd

Bill Brinton, Esq.

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Highway Beautification Act: A Behind-the-Scenes Peek

Editorial by Pat Meade

Photography by Pat Meade and Andy Kesselem

As newcomers to Scenic Ohio (SO), my husband, Andy, and I were fortunate to attend our first Scenic America symposium last October.

The reception dinner was held in Washington DC at the well-appointed, 50-room, 1905 mansion, Anderson House —The Society of the Cincinnati, located along Embassy Row in historic Dupont Circle.

Scenic America’s Chair Ronald Lee Fleming introduced keynote speaker U.S. Senator Tom Udall (D-NM), whose father Stewart Udall was Secretary of the Interior during the Johnson administration. Sen. Udall paid homage to Lady Bird and President Lyndon B. Johnson and Laurance S. Rockefeller for their vision, fortitude and determination for laying the foundation to protecting America’s natural resources, especially the passage of the Highway Beautification Act in 1965.

Special guests Lynda Bird Johnson Robb, her daughter Lucinda Robb, Larry Rockefeller and Congressman Sam Farr, whose father was California Senator Fred Farr that chaired the Senate Natural Resources Committee, represented second and third generations of political families and friends supporting a common cause with a seemingly uphill battle, keeping America beautiful.

Udall fondly recounted being invited to Luci’s (Johnson) 18th birthday party at the White House. There was a “rock ‘n roll band” and at his mom’s (embarrassing) urging, he asked the First Lady for a dance and then added she was good! Later, he recalled a quote from Laurance S. Rockefeller. “How we treat our land, how we build upon it, how we act toward our air and water will in the long run tell what kind of people we really are.” He said Rockefeller was known for his generosity, as America’s leading conservationist, and received numerous awards including the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1969.

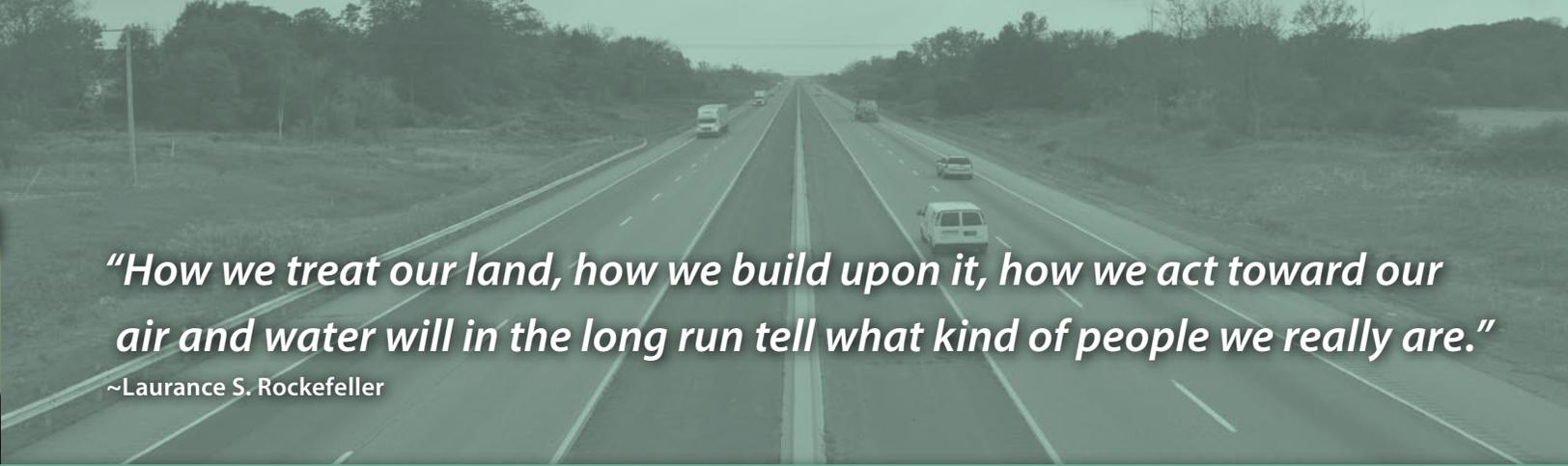
During Johnson’s leadership, The Wilderness Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Clean Air Act, the Water Quality Act were enacted into law and more than 45 new national parks and wildlife refuges were created. And activist Lady Bird Johnson was known as the catalyst and inspirational force for all things environmental during that time and is credited with championing the Highway Beautification Act that stood for preserving the open road (by removing highway billboards) and planting roadside areas. Additionally, the First Lady, philanthropists and a committee of doers enriched the nation’s capital with lush landscaping, complementing DC’s architecturally diverse skyline and historic landmarks.

Other Lady Bird lasting legacies include her beautifying Texas highways and she’s the founder of what’s known today as the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

After dinner, Lynda Bird Johnson Robb visited each table and inspired guests to be like Dr. Seuss’ Lorax as she mysteriously imparted, “Remember the Truffula tree.” I thought to myself— what does remember the Truffula tree mean? The Lorax believed in protecting, treasuring and experiencing the world’s natural beauty but his values weren’t shared by the business community. He mentored, “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it’s not.” To me, she was encouraging all affiliate member volunteers to persevere and advance the mission of the Highway Beautification Act at the state level because if not us, then who?

The next day, a joint resolution recognizing the 50th Anniversary of the Highway Beautification Act of 1965 unanimously passed the Senate and was introduced by U.S. Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Tom Udall (D-NM).

How we look at the world is how we can change it. So what do you envision? And perhaps more importantly, what are you willing to do to make your vision a reality?



“How we treat our land, how we build upon it, how we act toward our air and water will in the long run tell what kind of people we really are.”

~Laurance S. Rockefeller

Scenic America's Main Event: Scenic50 Symposium

by Pat Meade

President Lyndon B. Johnson's foresight on America's development remains relevant, 50 years later, as threats to America's visual environment still exist.

Scenic America's President Mary Tracy welcomed guests as I photographed her with Larry Rockefeller outside The National Press Club (see photos above left).

The Scenic50 Symposium kicked off with a pre-recorded oral history about the first White House Conference on Natural Beauty by one of its planners, Henry Diamond, the former Special Assistant to Laurance S. Rockefeller.

Scenic America (SA) helps citizens safeguard scenic qualities and improve America's visual environment.

The agenda was based on Scenic America's white paper, *Taking the Long View: A Proposal for Realizing America the Beautiful*, which details an actionable framework based on five, long-term, policy-making initiatives and proposed solutions which are summarized below:

1. Preserving Community Character:

Distinctive character and sense of space includes poorly planned urban and suburban growth, misguided community leadership and nonconforming retail brands.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Enact legislation for creating/expanding historic districts (including viewshed lands), scenic byway programs and acquiring open space
- Create a Gateway Enhancement block grant for improving roadways leading into our communities

2. Honoring Parks & Open Spaces:

Parks and open spaces contribute to our health and quality of life, but inadequate funding and other development interests may impede expanding current lands.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Increase funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the creation of parks and acquisition of open space.
- Establish a national inventory of parks and open spaces to determine funding priorities for acquisitions and investment.
- Require context-sensitive design for publicly-funded projects in parks and open spaces.

3. Celebrating Byways & Gateways:

Scenic byways are sources of pride and economic engines for the communities they traverse yet funding has been eliminated, support for byway designations is in jeopardy, and gateways are under increasing threat from visual blight.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Restore funding for the National Scenic Byways Program and renew the application process for designating new scenic byways.
- Form a national association of gateway communities and work on common issues.
- Create common Gateway Impact Zones eligible for grants to improve their scenic character.

4. Undergrounding Overhead Wires:

Cost is the biggest objection by utility companies but the benefits prove otherwise.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Encourage all states to adopt a dedicated revenue model to promote underground wiring.
- Require underground wiring in new development or when replacing aging infrastructure.
- Commission an impartial national cost benefit analysis and upfront costs.

5. Promoting Beautiful Highways:

Preserving the natural beauty of the landscapes that highways traverse is being undermined by the outdoor advertising industry and other business interests.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Enact federal and state legislation to prohibit the removal or destruction of public trees for the purpose of increasing billboard visibility.
- Adhere to the law's original intent by prohibiting digital billboards on federally-funded roads.
- Require Congress to restore amortization as a legal option so state and local governments can purchase erected billboards along HBA-regulation highways.

Allied organization leaders discussed advancing scenic conservation and through knowledge transfer, grow public involvement and convert it into civic action to protect and enhance public spaces and the visual environment for the next 50 years.



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JOIN US!

MISSION AND GOALS

Preserve and expand Scenic Byways. Conserve Ohio's scenic, historic, cultural, ecological resources.

Educate the importance of Scenic values in relationship to cultural / historic tourism and the economic growth and well-being of small villages and cities.

Elevate the importance of Scenic values in relationship to Ohio's gateways, portals and "views from the road" for millions of travellers in and through Ohio.

Advance context sensitive design. Work with local jurisdictions, villages, cities, counties, and townships to knit transportation improvements with land use, gateways and other local needs.

Reduce proliferation of off-site signage and billboards that degrade property values and create unsafe distractions and public welfare issues along state and federal highway systems.

Advance "Green" solutions like vegetative sound walls and storm water bio-retention to modernize and make highway corridors more sustainable.

Educate ODOT Districts on how to better manage the "greensward" of our highway corridors.

Give back to local jurisdictions in our Home Rule State the ability to control their visual resources by providing amortization legislation.

Work with local jurisdictions and State agencies including ODOT, Ohio History Connection, Ohio Humanities Council, ODNR, Ohio Division of Travel and Tourism, Ohio Department of Commerce, Garden Clubs and Historical Societies to preserve and conserve scenic resources.

CURRENT PROGRAMS

Working with ODOT to improve roadways, including promotion of living sound walls and improving vegetative management practices. Continue Scenic Ohio "Green Highways" educational workshops with each of the 12 ODOT District offices.

Working with the Ohio Humanities Council, Ohio History Connection, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, ODOT, and The Ohio Department of Development/Division of Tourism to advance a unified online Scenic Resource map and improved Ohio tourism website.

Meeting with Ohio Garden Clubs of America to coordinate advocacy of issues of mutual interest.

Recognizing agencies, organizations and individuals who have significantly contributed to preserving, conserving and enhancing the visual resources of Ohio with the annual Scenic Ohio Awards program. Conducting the awards program to maximize public education on the importance of Scenic Resources.

Continuing to advocate for safe and beautiful highway corridors that minimize distractions that reduce safety to the driving public. This includes distracting lighting, on-premise signs, off-premise signs, billboards and digital billboards.

DONATIONS ARE WELCOME!

Send your tax deductible contributions to:

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